

Tape #151

William Harrison Barlow Mott

Date: July 12, 1986

Speaker: Doris Morrill

Doris Morrill: Before I start, I would just like to say that Uncle Bill, as I always called him, was a very special person to me. Like I told Francis the other day, he saved my life once when I was a little girl and he had the barbershop down here. A girl started beating up on me right in front. She was bigger than I was, if you can imagine that. I remember Uncle Bill coming out and putting his arm around both of us, so kind and so loving, and I've loved him dearly ever since, and I was just a little girl in grade school.

This is the history of William Harrison Barlow Mott written by a daughter, Catherine Ross:

My father, William Harrison Barlow Mott, was born May 9, 1879 in Salina, Sevier County, Utah, the son of John Wintworth and Catherine Holden Mott. He came to Vernal, Uintah County, Utah, with his parents in 1896. He attended his early school years in Salina and later he attended Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

After his schooling, he operated a farm, ran livestock, and hauled freight into the valley. He began barbering in 1910 and was still engaged in that occupation at the time of his death. He married Avalena Preece March 4, 1913 in Vernal Utah. He was an active worker in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout his life, and at the time of his death, he was the first assistant to the chairman of the genealogical committee of the Vernal First Ward. He was an active member of the 97th Quorum of Seventies. He filled two missions in the Uintah Stake and was first counselor in the Sunday school for some time. He was baptized a member of the LDS church in the icy waters of Ashton Gulch, which had to have a dam put in the stream to collect enough water for immersion. He was baptized by F.D. Killpack on January 20, 1899.

A lot of changes have been made in Vernal since Daddy started barbering in 1910 with Bob Wimmer in a little shop three doors south of the Bank of Vernal. These were the days when the highway turned south at the bank corner and went out to the Alhandra Ferry, when there were but a few business houses in the downtown area and when Main Street was often so muddy that freight wagons would be stuck for a day or two before they could go on their way. Daddy saw hitching posts give way to parking meters, and the old freight outfit of two wagons pulled by a four- to six-horse team give way to outsize trucks. He remembered, too, when the mail came in by way of the stage from Price, Utah, instead of by bus and plane from Salt Lake City. In fact, Daddy drove stage over the old route himself in the winter, the best time he could make was two to three miles a day after, which he fed the horses, tied them to the wagon wheels, scooped out a hole

in the snow for his bedroll and woke in the morning with a foot or two of snow covering him. In fact, this pioneer of Ashley Valley had a good many interesting and exciting experiences.

In 1898 he went with a bunch of sheep shearers across Diamond Mountain to Brown's Park. Because of the new snowdrifts, they were three days reaching the Park, where they sheared for Joe Davenport. They camped at the head of Willow Creek when about sundown a Mexican walked into the camp with a gun and demanded Mr. Davenport to walk down the canyon with him. The Mexican had previously worked for Mr. Davenport but had quarreled with him and threatened his life, and then left camp with a new horse and saddle which belonged to Mr. Davenport. Tension was high in the camp as none of the men were armed, therefore, Mr. Davenport complied with the angry Mexican's request and the two receded in the distance to the bend in the canyon where Mr. Davenport refused to go further, fearing for his life if they got out of sight of the men at camp. Finally, he persuaded the Mexican to go back to his wife in a sheep wagon further down the canyon and to return with his wagon the following morning. Then Mr. Davenport returned to his men.

During the night, messengers were dispatched to Brown's Park for armed aid which arrived about dawn. The men hid in the rocks at the side of the road and waited. When the sheep wagon rolled into hearing distance, the men shouted for the Mexican to halt. He immediately thrust a rifle out in front and fired. The horses bolted from the bombardment that followed. A pup in the wagon was killed. The Mexican jumped into the brush at the side of the road and left his wife, who was unhurt in the careening wagon at the mercy of the runaway team. Another Mexican, watching from the ridge, intercepted the horses, stopped them and jumped into the wagon and drove off down the canyon. Davenport's men surrounded the clump of bushes into which the Mexican had leaped. They watched and waited all day but nothing happened. During the night, however, the fugitive slipped past his guards, mounted a horse tied nearby and escaped. They later learned that he had been wounded in a fracas and that he died when he reached White River. When Daddy came home in the spring, he was shocked to learn that his mother had died and been buried. Five years later his father died.

One summer day, Daddy herded a band of Angora goats, then traded them for young ones which he later sold to Al Hatch for a dollar per head. He worked in the Gilsonite mines in Gusher, Bonanza, and Dragon and also brought passengers in from Dragon to Vernal using freight wagons equipped with spring seats. On one of the trips, his first team consisted of two old horses and two unbroken colts. They hadn't been on the road long when something frightened the colts, causing a runaway. The dust in the road was so deep that the large sharp wheels of the freight wagon picked it up and threw it into the wagon so that dirt, speed and jolts gave the passengers a wild ride. He held the team the best he could and soon had them calmed down. He changed horses several times before they reached

Alhandra Ferry. Some miles before they'd made the ferry, one of the horses quit, so Daddy was forced to bring the wagon on minus one horse. It was an eventful ride and when the crossing was safely made, the passengers were very much impressed by his driving and offered to set up the drinks for him in a tent that served as a saloon. But not being a drinking man, Daddy declined their offer and told them that it had been his desire to bring them safely the long distance of the trip.

The ferry at Alhandra was operated by cable, the boat being connected to the cable at different angles depending upon which direction it was to cross. The angle at which the stream hit the ferry would propel it along. Often, in high water, huge trees would get tangled in the cable making the crossing difficult and dangerous. In the winter, of course, people crossed the Green River on the ice. One time Daddy and his brother were coming from Dragon and the ice was quite thin at the ferry, and knowing that the horses and wagons would be too heavy to cross at the same time, they unhitched the team and began pushing the wagon across. First one wheel then another broke through the ice. The brothers took the box off the wagon and slid it over, then pushed and pulled the wagon over. In going back for the team, they tried to find a narrow spot to cross. The narrows were not completely frozen over, the men forced the horses over the edge of the ice into the water to cross the channel. One of the horses climbed on the ice on the other side, but the other horse fell as he made the leap and his head went under and though the stream wasn't more than knee deep, he couldn't get up. So Daddy leaped into the water to hold the animal's head up while the brother aided it to its feet. Soaking wet as they were, they couldn't stop to build a fire as the wet horses would freeze. So they got the outfit assembled as quickly as they could and went on. Daddy and his brother walked to keep warm until their clothing became so frozen they could walk no longer. Then they climbed in the wagon and rode to Bonanza where there was a little storehouse in which stop-overs were made. Here they were able to build a fire and dry themselves and cook a meal. Hardy pioneers as they were, they neither one so much as caught a cold.

In 1907 Daddy went to the Brigham Young University, returning to Vernal in 1910 when he began his career as a barber. With the exception of a few years in Salt Lake City, California, and Salina, Utah, he remained in Vernal the entire time. Here they raised seven children, two boys and five girls: William Vaughn, Catherine, Francis Eleanor, Beth, Eloise, Evelyn and Warren Denzil.

We had a humble home full of love and devotion for each other. Our father and mother were two of the most wonderful parents a family could ever hope to have. They were so devoted to each other and they sacrificed over the years to raise the children, but never with a word of complaint. His greatest desire was to give his family the things they needed and to set a good example, which he did. My kind, precious father lived so close to God's way of life that to me and all who knew him, he was perfect.

He passed away at the Vernal Hospital after a short illness on December 2, 1952. It was the greatest shock and sadness I have ever undergone. My dear mother never did adjust to his death completely. She waited only for the day that she would be permitted to join him, the one she had loved and waited so long to be united with once more. She died September 11, 1962, at their home in Vernal. Her death was another shock and a great sadness. The parting of these two dear and precious parents will have to remain unexpressed because I do not have enough words to express my sorrow, but I must have good reasoning and an understanding heart, for I know that my earthly loss must be "God's Eternal Gain."

I know the 73 years of my Daddy's life was rich and full. As I write his autobiography, I thrill with the experience that was his, and through those experiences, he came through the finest man on earth, and I pay tribute to him today for all the many sacrifices he made for me and I thank God for the privilege He gave me when He gave me my Daddy.

Woman: I think most of us here should remember him, you do don't you Opal?

Opal: I remember him as such a big, handsome man with beautiful gray, a lot of gray hair. That's the way I remember him.

Woman: I remember when you'd take screaming kids in for him to cut their hair. He'd say, "Now, just leave them with me for a minute." And they were no more problem, I don't know what he did, but they always went back without a problem. I know my oldest son had quite a time. And in those days we didn't have a beauty parlor to style our hair, we just had Mr. Mott to cut it, and he did a good job. Well, that was very nice, Doris, and I appreciate you giving it and we appreciate Catherine for having it fixed up for us.

Uintah Historical Society business followed.